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ABSTRACT

The necessary ingredients for developing a successful developmental college reading program fall into three major divisions--the responsibilities of college presidents and deans to the reading program, the problems of establishing a strong foundation, and the development of a proper image. The major responsibility of college administrators is in the selection of well-trained, capable, and enthusiastic instructors. The next step is determining the proper aims and objectives in accordance with the philosophy of a particular school. Whatever may be decided, the program must contain the following attributes to be effective: diagnosis, vocabulary development, adequate skills development, and the use of materials which are provocative and stimulating enough to satisfy the various student needs. Individualization must also be included, since it is the necessary link for the above four attributes. However, complete success of a program is achieved through the favorable image which is projected to students, administrators, and citizens. (CL)

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DEVELOPMENTAL READING AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

"Organization and Administration of a College Reading Program"

Thursday, May 7, 1970 4:00-5:00 p.m.

In too many instances reading programs, like Topsy, just "growed"--without any format or design. Many such programs have expanded, matured, and have become very successful; others have died on the vine. What are the necessary ingredients for developing a successful program? These innate parts seem to fall into three major divisions; the responsibilities of college presidents and deans to the reading program, the problems of establishing a strong foundation, and the developing of a proper image.

The major responsibility of these college administrators is in the selection of well-trained, capable, and <u>enthusiastic</u> instructors. Such instructors are the very heart of a

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successful reading program. Too many administrators seem to believe that anyone can teach reading. The most successful programs have been developed by people who are not only well-trained in reading, but who have a built-in personality combination of cheerfulness, compassion, and perserverance. One's powers of positive thinking must be overwhelming if he is to sell reading to people who can't and won't read.

The next step in building an effective program is the determining of proper aims and objectives in accordance with the philosophy of the particular school. If one is teaching in a junior or community college, the "open door" admissions policy must be taken into consideration. Plans must be made to help the adult illiterate, the egghead of the freshman class, the methodical lawyer who studies Life magazine as he would a law book, and all the great majority who are poor and average readers.

Careful consideration must also be given to the kind of course the college administration expects. Is their philosophy one which expects the reading course to provide therapeutic help for a few students, or does the college believe in helping a great number of people with less emphasis on reading therapy? Some colleges offer individualized help; others have small sections; and still others have large groups of fifty in a single class. All may function effectively; however, the point of view expressed here is that, while individualization would perhaps be ideal, small sections with a maximum of

sixteen students is the most satisfactory to administrators and instructors alike.

Limiting the number of students in each class inevitably leads to the voluntary versus involuntary argument. Many college students know they have a low reading ability and still will not voluntarily enroll in a reading course. In a way, their reluctance is a kind of face-saving device; if they are forced to enroll, their presence in a reading course can be blamed on that "lousy counselor", "grouchy dame" or "weird dean". Secretly, they know that the reading course is for their own good; they are glad to be taking it; and they usually discover new and wonderful possibilities in themselves.

At Odessa College, a student cannot be forced to enroll, but the course is strongly recommended if he falls below the equivalent of the 12th grade on the S.C.A.T., A.C.T., or S.A.T. By the second semester, word has gotten around that the reading course is worth taking, and many better than average and superior readers enroll. With the euphemism "voluntary enrollment" and with firm counselors directing students into reading, the student finds satisfaction in successful reading experiences.

The decision must be made as to whether the program will be a reading clinic, a reading-study skills center, a reading-writing laboratory, or a reading laboratory emphasizing speed-reading and/or developmental reading and/or remedial reading. The title reading clinic implies extensive diagnostic work. College reading clinics are used more to diagnose reading

diabilities in children and for teacher training rather than in teaching the college population to read. Even though such data can be extremely valuable, college students can be working constructively from the beginning with progressive diagnosis being utilized throughout the semester.

A reading study skills center implies that a great deal of help will be given in the study area perhaps utilizing the students' actual textbooks. Practice on taking notes, making outlines, use of symbolic language, reading charts, and diagrams are an integral part of such an approach.

The reading-writing laboratory in too many instances is merely remedial English and makes little attempt to teach specific reading skills. The English departments assume basic reading competency. John Bens, in the March '69 English Journal, seems to have an inkling that this competency isn't there! He offers two alternatives in course titles: "English for the Stillborn and Basic Glossolalia."

Since the term "reading laboratory" implies a "scientific approach," and many deans and "powers that be" are highly impressed with euphemistic terminology, by all means use a "scientific approach". In this situation a large number of reading machines are usually assembled, such as mechanical reading pacers for rapid reading; films to eliminate regressions; and tachistoscopes which widen usuable eye span. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the students still can't organize, still can't outline, and still can't get the main idea. No

matter how great the teacher is; what the school's philosophy happens to be; how many students are assigned to each class; or what the course title is, the program must have the following attributes to be effective.

Diagnosis is the cornerstone of a strong foundation for teaching reading. Without diagnosis one cannot set proper goals. The instructor must give the student a realistic picture of himself from the diagnostic evaluation. Such a student-teacher conference will help the student to progress satisfactorily and to realize his goals. Too many teachers diagnose extensively and then file the information away instead of individually informing and discussing the results. If a person is to know where he is going, he must know where he <u>is</u> from the beginning. Self awareness through diagnosis is not sufficient. Extrinsic motivation must be provided at this point enabling the student to see the relationship between his present status and his potential.

Vocabulary is the second corner of our foundation, because it cannot be separated from one's understanding of the written word. The proper way to teach vocabulary skills is a moot question. Even with the wealth of good materials and creative ideas, vocabulary building continues to be the bane of our culture. The teacher must overcome these limitations and develop a program especially designed for his own student interests and needs. No single program, book, or method will suffice for even a small group and certainly not for a large

student population.

The third corner of this reading foundation is the development of adequate study skills. Reading, apart from study, barely exists on the college level. Too many students can hardly keep up with their required textbook reading and lesson assignments; outside reading is out of the question and ignored. Therefore, a student must be taught organizational skills and economic use of study time. The old, but reliable SQ3R or some version of it, needs to be taught and applied again and again if necessary. The old trite phrase "finding the main idea" is still at the very heart of most reading problems, and the techniques must be taught. Other terms that make instructors squirm are <u>outlining</u> and <u>taking notes</u>, but no boxed materials can take the place of a hard-working teacher, who expects her students to be equally diligent in solving their problems.

The fourth corner of the reading foundation must be books, books, books. Such reading materials must be provocative and stimulating enough to satisfy even the most belligerent or indifferent reader. There must be an attractive profusion of paperbacks and hardbacks in a comfortable, pleasant atmosphere. After all, one is witnessing a first experience for many students--the reading of an <u>entire</u> book!

Individualization links the four corners. Our many techniques are the bricks and mortar which provide for individual differences. Individualization is the daily miracle necessary to bring the students to life.

This is as far as many go! The presumption is made that the responsibilities of presidents and deans are fully realized, and sound fundamentals are now giving students the solid foundations necessary for their education. Yet, the picture is not complete; such a reading program can still fail. The missing ingredient is IMAGE.

Some reading teachers live by image making alone, but image cannot be a substitute for the reading foundation just constructed. The image of a reading program is projected through students', instructors', presidents', and deans' attitudes toward reading and the school's reading program.

One may abhor the idea of image making or consider it a false value. Obviously, the administration must be favorably impressed if financial aid is forthcoming. Obviously, students must also be sold on the value of reading courses since these offer little or no credit and since every student's time is limited. Obviously, the people whom the college serves must know and understand the program's function to support it by enrollment and tax dollars. Then, why is this image aspect ignored? Every reading teacher, from the outset, must be excited over his program and must be a salesman who believes he is selling the most important product on earth--the ability to read with understanding.